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Governor Signs Extended Unemployment Benefits Program Agreement

Montpelier, Vt. -- Governor Jim Douglas has signed an agreement with the US Department of Labor that allows long-term unemployed workers to continue to receive unemployment benefits while looking for work.

The Emergency Unemployment Compensation (EUC) Program was included in the supplemental budget signed by President Bush Monday. The program provides up to 13 weeks of additional benefits.

Governor Douglas signed the agreement as soon as possible to ensure a quick implementation of the program.

"Vermont is confronting the national economic slowdown on a number of fronts and we are going to continue to make strengthening our economy and making Vermont more prosperous the top priority of this administration," Governor Douglas said. "This program is an essential part of the safety net we provide Vermonters who may need a hand up as they pursue new employment opportunities."

Eligibility

EUC benefits will be available to individuals who have exhausted all regular unemployment benefits. Qualifying individuals will continue to be eligible for an additional 13 weeks provided they do not become eligible for regular unemployment benefits.

In addition to having exhausted state benefits, a worker must have worked 20 weeks in full-time covered employment or earned the equivalent in covered wages to qualify for extended benefits. Individuals found eligible for the EUC benefits will be paid the same weekly benefit amount as previously paid under the Regular Unemployment program. Emergency unemployment compensation payments will cease on June 30, 2009.

How to apply

Beginning Monday, July 7, 2008, the Unemployment Insurance & Wages Division will send notices to potentially eligible workers arranging times to contact the unemployment claim center. Between 200 and 500 individuals exhaust regular benefits each month. “We think there are currently about 4000 individuals who may be eligible, with more likely to become so in the coming months. This is good news for Vermonters who have lost their jobs and are struggling to find new work”, said Patricia Moulton Powden, Commissioner of VDOL.

When will the first checks be mailed?

Signing the agreement this week makes the week beginning July 6 the effective week. Individuals who establish eligibility and certify they are unemployed for the week ending July 12th should receive their first benefit check on or before July 18th.

Financing

The benefit and administrative costs of the EUC program will not be funded directly by Vermont employers. Funds have been appropriated from the Federal Unemployment Trust Fund, which receives funding from a tax on employers, the Federal Unemployment Tax.

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